# GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
# EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
# LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3121
ANSWERED ON:16.03.2016
Look East and Act East Policy
Meinya Dr. Thokchom

**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the key principles and objectives of India's 'Look East and Act East policy';

(b) the steps taken by the Government during the last two years to strengthen India's relations with countries in South East Asia;

(c) whether there is any headway in the talks regarding Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP); and

(d) if so, the details and the benefits likely to accrue to India as a result thereof?

## Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) India's Look East Policy (LEP) has been a major pillar of our foreign policy since the early 1990s. In the second half of 2014, LEP was upgraded to Act East Policy which focuses on the extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region. The policy which was originally conceived as an economic initiative, has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions including establishment of institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. The key principles and objectives of ""Act East Policy" is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region with other countries in our neighbourhood.

(b) We have upgraded our relations to strategic partnership with Singapore in November, 2015. Thus we now have strategic partnership with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, Singapore and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and forged close ties with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Further, apart from ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS), we have also been actively engaged in regional fora such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Two summits of Forum for India-Pacific Island Cooperation (FIPIC) were held in Suva, Fiji (November 2014) and Jaipur, India (August 2015). There were several high level visits from both the sides.

In addition, various plans at bilateral and regional levels include steady efforts to develop and strengthen connectivity of Northeast with the ASEAN region through trade, culture, people-to-people contacts and physical infrastructure (road, airport, telecommunication, power, etc.). Some of the major projects include Kaladan Multi-moda Transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, Rhi-Tiddim Road Project, Border Haats, etc.

In area of trade, the India ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) for Trade in Goods was signed in August 2009 and came into force in January 2010. The trade increased substantially from 56.23 billion USD in 2010-11 to 76.52 billion USD in 2014-15. The share of bilateral trade with ASEAN is almost 10% of India's total trade. The India-ASEAN Agreement for trade in Services and India-ASEAN Agreement on Investment have been signed in November, 2014. It has come into force with effect from 1st July, 2015. These agreements are expected to strengthen the business and commercial relations between ASEAN and India.

(c) & (d) The 11th round of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was held from 15-19 February, 2016 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam wherein all the RCEP participating Countries had submitted their initial offers on goods, services and investment. The RCEP is intended to facilitate and thereby increase goods and services trade as well as investment flows amongst the participating Countries.